



P1

United States
Department of
Agriculture

DEC - 7 1998

Food and
Consumer
Service

Reply to
Attn. of: SP 99-05

Subject: Lost and Stolen Ticket Policy and Plastic Cards

To: STATE AGENCY DIRECTORS - Colorado ED, Iowa, Kansas,
(Child Nutrition Programs) Missouri ED, Montana OPI,
Nebraska ED, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Utah and
Wyoming ED

This memorandum supplements guidance on the replacement of needy students' lost or stolen tickets which is contained in FNS Instruction 765-7, REV. 2. It addresses those cases in which the school issues laminated or plastic "credit"-type cards for use in the school's food service counting and claiming system.

In recent years many schools have implemented the use of automated counting and claiming systems to assist in counting free, reduced price and paid meals served in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), as well as to assist with accurate accounting of expenditures from pre-paid meal accounts, where schools offer students this option. Most of these automated systems operate by having the school issue each student a laminated or plastic "credit"-type card, which the student then uses in some type of card reader device at the point of service in the meal service line.

Plastic cards used in an automated system typically have a much higher per-unit cost to provide to students than do other, older forms of exchange such as tickets, tokens or paper cards. Furthermore, a number of schools have students use these plastic cards for other purposes, in addition to their use for participating in the NSLP, such as for gaining access to student activities, school services, etc. Nevertheless, despite the relative cost of such cards, or the fact that they have multi-purpose uses in some schools, the policy for handling lost, stolen and misused plastic cards used as a medium of exchange in the NSLP must follow the policy set forth

in FNS Instruction 765-7 REV. 2. The provisions of this policy include the requirement that "a minimum of three ticket replacements, or special meal arrangements resulting from three lost or stolen tickets, must be allowed each [free or reduced price] student within each school year."

Please note that it is not necessary to replace a lost plastic card with another plastic card, if the school chooses to make "special meal arrangements," as indicated above. Or, the school may issue an inexpensive replacement card, such as one made of paper, instead of a regular plastic one, in circumstances where the less expensive replacement card can be accommodated by the automated system.

If it wishes to do so, the school can offer to sell the student a replacement plastic card, if the student would prefer to have a full replacement. But if a student declines this option the school must meet the minimum requirements of the NSLP replacement policy, even if there is no alternative to issuing up to three replacement regular plastic cards to the student.

Please contact our office if you have any questions.

Ann C. De Groat

ANN C. DEGROAT
Regional Director
Child Nutrition Programs

